

# **Tool for Merging Foster Family Assessment (FFA) and the Adoptive Family Assessment (AFA)**

Document #3 - DRAFT

## **1. MOTIVATION**

Include reasons for wanting to adopt and/or foster. Are the applicants' motivations consistent with the realities of adoption and/or foster parenting? Explain why or why not. Has this been a total family decision? Discuss fertility issues.

## **2. CHILD DESIRED/PREFERRED**

Discuss types of legal status of children in care. What type of legal risk are they willing to take? Does the family understand the Foster/Adoption Program? Will they participate in the Foster/Adoption Program? What is the family's range of acceptance and type of children they can accept, including children with an unknown parent, parental substance abuse, criminal record, mental illness, and mental challenges. Is the family willing to accept a sibling group? What are the family's perceptions of the types of children who are available; feelings toward and treatment of adoptive children (general and specific to their foster children if placement currently exists); if children are placed in the home during adoptive study or when updating or re-licensing, consider presentation of foster children to community (sensitivity, advocacy). What expectations do they have for the child they will adopt in terms of academic achievement, employment and career choices, peer relationships, relationship to own children, affection, intimacy and general personality and interest? How important is it that a child lives up to these expectations? Parenting Interest Survey attachment.

## **3. EXPERIENCE WITH CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

Based on their experience with their own and other children and their expressed attitudes, identify the strengths and needs of the family as they will impact their ability to adopt or foster a child. Describe the family's experience and reactions to needs and behaviors such as sexual abuse, sexual orientation, attachment issues, feeding, stealing, enuresis, running away, masturbation, etc. and any experience with children who are emotionally disturbed, delinquent, developmentally or physically impaired or have other special needs.

## **4. TRAINING AND SKILL BUILDING DEVELOPMENT**

Did the trainer have any concerns? Were they addressed with the family? What is the specialist's assessment of the concerns? Has any family member received first aid or CPR training? Is any family member currently certified in CPR? Training completed or needed by the family?

## **5. DISCIPLINE TECHNIQUES**

What are the discipline techniques used or to be used by the applicants? Are these techniques consistent with foster parent licensing requirements and discipline policy? How will the applicants' discipline techniques impact their ability to parent? Review with the applicants their ideas and methods of discipline and supervision used with their children and their attitude toward the discipline policy. Has the Corporal Punishment

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form been reviewed and signed? What discipline techniques will the applicant use when others have failed? Is the applicant able to change their methods of discipline to meet the special needs of the child? What is the applicant's definition of abuse? What does the applicant feel is the purpose of discipline? How is positive behavior rewarded (positive reinforcement)? Where and how did the applicant learn to discipline?

## **6. CHILD CARE AND TEMPORARY CARE**

What are the child care plans if both parents or a single parent is working out of the home? For adoptive parents, are there plans for reduced hours, maternity or paternity leave, extended leave, or one parent quitting work at the time of placement?

## **7. FUTURE PLANS FOR THE CHILD**

Indicate alternate plans for rearing the child to adulthood should the parents' health be impaired or should one or both die. Provide information on parent's health and retirement plans. What arrangement would be made if a parent died or became disabled? Discuss custody goals in the event of their incapacity or death of either or both parents (might include arrangements for trust fund). Have they made a Will? Discuss when and how they will tell the child about the adoption. What will they tell the child? What will they tell the child about the birth parents? Would they be willing for the child to contact the birth parents in the future, or have the birth parents contact the child? Would they be willing to assist the child in locating the birth parents? Do they understand the law on closed records as it is currently? Who will be the legal adoptive parent?

## **8. BIRTH FAMILY CONNECTIONS**

What are the applicant's attitudes towards contact with birth families? Are the applicant's open to visits with birth parents in their home? Are the applicants open to supervising and providing transportation for visits? What is the family's willingness to cooperate with visits with biological family members? How will the family transition from foster care to adoption? Discuss issues surrounding legal risk. Discuss future issues such as contact with siblings, grandparents, relatives, and other significant persons. Under what conditions will contact be allowable?

## **9. APPLICANT'S FAMILY AND GENERAL BACKGROUND**

Address issues, concerns, previous experiences, and events that would impact the applicant's ability to be an adoptive and/or foster parent.

Include a brief biography of each applicant in the family generally describing them according to the following items:

- a. Family and Childhood:
  - Sibling relationships
  - Relationships of applicant(s) with parents/stepparents/guardians

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- Parents' descriptions and occupations
- Type of home life: history of domestic violence, sexual abuse, AODA, and mental health; degree of affection and how expressed in the family; mobility of family (family of origin and current family)
- Discipline: methods used; feelings and memories; physical and emotional
- b. School/Educational history
- c. Work history - stability (if served in Armed Services, discharge papers). Current employer and are they able to be contacted at work?
- d. General consensus description of the personality and temperament of the applicants
- e. Religion and spirituality: applicant's affiliation and attendance, role of religion/spirituality in the home, and plan regarding adoptive and/or foster child. Are there religious beliefs or spirituality issues that might impact the care of a foster child? What was the applicant's religion within their family of origin?

## **10. FINANCES**

Do the applicants have the financial resources to meet their own family needs without relying on adoption subsidy payments or foster care reimbursement? Total monthly income and expenditures. Have the applicants filed for bankruptcy in the past 10 years? If yes, what was the history and what are the current circumstances? Does there appear to be disproportionate funding (i.e. large house with no family services)? Are there concerns regarding the applicants ability to manage money?

## **11. HEALTH AND PSYCHOLOGICAL**

Dates of medical statements and summary. Confirmation of immunization records of the child. Are there any medical, physical, emotional health, alcohol or substances abuse history or current issues with the applicants, family or household members that might impact the care of a foster or adoptive child? Are there any incidents or issues with domestic violence in the current family? Past and present serious illnesses and/or problems. Experiences with loss, separation or other life crisis. Management of stress and anger.

## **12. MARRIAGE/RELATIONSHIP OF APPLICANTS**

Do members of this family have activities and friendships outside of the home which can provide support and an outlet for emotions, as opposed to a closed family system with no supports or outlet other than each other? How do they demonstrate trust, love? How do they feel about affection and intimacy, modesty in the home? What would they change? How have they handled difficult adjustments? If previously married, how is this marriage different? Describe family relationships, including extended family, family rituals, schedules, and values. What changes do they anticipate with placement of a child? How do they handle stress individually and as a couple? What crises or stressed have they had to face as individuals, as a family? How rigid or flexible is the family

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system of values and conduct? How much tolerance do they have for different lifestyles? How do they function as individuals and as a couple? How do they share in the relationship? If married less than 12 months, discuss the need for some evidence of marital stability prior to adopting, and the added strains the placement of a child brings to a marriage still in the early stages of adjustment. Discuss any special circumstances to be considered in assessing the stability of a marriage of less than 12 months. Discuss domestic violence and substance abuse infertility issues.

## **13. PREVIOUS MARRIAGES OR RELATIONSHIPS**

How were previous marriages/relationships dealt with? Were there any children? What is their current relationship with these children and with the person they were previously in a relationship with? What is the custody arrangement? Is child support paid, amount, is current and if court ordered docket number.

## **14. CHILDREN OF APPLICANTS**

Briefly describe the children: provide name, age, physical description, personality, interests and academic progress. Discuss peer and sibling relationships and each child's concept of foster care and adoption. How do the children feel about bringing a new member into the family? Will these children be able to share with a foster or an adopted child? Will they be able to tolerate some difficult behavior? Describe their concept of the discipline they receive. For what behaviors are they disciplined? What are the rules of the house? What happens if the rules are broken? What rules are never to be broken? If the children are old enough, ask them to describe themselves either in writing or verbally.

Provide names, addresses and ages of any children of applicants not living in the home. Describe the situation and relationship; include both minors and adult children as described by the applicants and household members or through contacts with any children not living in the home.

## **15. FAMILY/OTHER HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS/RELATIONSHIP**

Summarize information about these individuals according to the following by name and age:

- a. Their role in the home and feeling regarding adoption and/or foster care
- b. What relationship will the person(s) have with the child?

Do members of this family have activities and friendships outside of the home which can provide support and an outlet for emotions, as opposed to a closed family system with no supports or outlet other than each other? How do they demonstrate trust and love? How do they feel about affection, intimacy, and modesty in the home? What would they change? How have they handled difficult adjustments? Describe family relationships, including extended family, family rituals, schedules and values. What changes do they

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anticipate with placement of a child? How do they handle stress? What crises or stresses have they had to face as individuals and as a family? How rigid or flexible is the family system of values and conduct? How much do they have for different lifestyles?

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## **16. FAMILY SUPPORTS**

Has the extended family been involved in the decision-making process? Friends and activities outside of the home

## **17. NEIGHBORHOOD, COMMUNITY, AND HOME**

Give the major characteristics of the neighborhood: rural or urban, young families, single family housing, renters or homeowners. Do they know their neighbors? Ethnic/racial makeup, resources available, etc. Include the community resources, i.e. schools, medical facilities, recreational areas, adoption and foster care resource centers, etc. that they will avail themselves of. How can special needs children's medical, psychological, and social needs be met? Be specific.

Note number of rooms, bathrooms, bedrooms particularly the area for the adoptive and/or the foster child. Describe housekeeping standards, yard area. If they have a pool, is it fenced from the rest of the yard? Does anyone in the home smoke? Confirm that there is a current fire evacuation plan for the home. Please explain. Note any hazardous conditions (i.e. pets). If requesting handicapped child, is the home handicap accessible? If applicable, give results of home safety inspection. Status of any noted deficiencies.

## **18. BACKGROUND CHECKS**

Whose fingerprints were taken and when? Describe the arrest record information disclosed by the applicant and all adult household members and the individual's explanation of arrest record and disposition.

Describe any self disclosed history of the applicant and all adult household members of any history of contact with any child protection agency as obtained from the application, a self disclosure form or during interviews. Confirm clearances of the applicants and all other household members on Child Protection Services records. Document the date and by whom the check was made. If CPS records check result shows prior substantiated reports, include the individual's explanation of the outcome of the investigation.

Have the applicants ever had a child (natural, step, or adopted) who was the subject of one or more court actions (i.e. dependency, severance, guardianship, juvenile action, domestic violence action, or criminal action) while in their custody or control? If so, explain the circumstances, name, place of birth, and birth date of child(ren), name of case manager(s), attorney(s), and judge(s) involved and results of those action(s).

## **19. REFERENCES**

For foster home licensing, four references are required. For adoption, a minimum of three non-relative references are required. Were the references generally positive, non-committal or negative? Describe any concerns mentioned and the specialist's follow-up on the concerns. Give consideration to the length of relationship and degree of contact.

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Obtain a reference from at least one relative. What is the attitude of the extended family toward adoption or foster care? If family has school aged children, a school reference is recommended, whenever possible.

**20. CLARIFICATION OF ROLES**

Has the CHILDS Provider (Adoption) Registry function been explained? Do they want to be listed with the CHILDS Provider (Adoption) Registry for consideration for available children?

What is the specialist's assessment of the foster and foster/adoptive family's willingness to participate in case staffing, permanency planning hearings, and court hearings? What is the perception of each of the individual's roles? Explain what services are available to the family before and after adoption may happen. Discuss reimbursable funds included in Adoption Assistance with the family.

**21. AGREEMENTS**

Were all points of agreement(s) discussed? Did both parents sign the required agreement(s)? Any reservations?

**22. EVALUATION**

What is the worker's assessment of the type of children the family should and/or should not parent? Summary of specialist's impressions and assessment of family's capacity for maintaining a successful adoption. Include any referral of the family for any psychological evaluation, consultation, counseling or additional education. Does the family and home meet the licensing requirements? Summarize your professional opinion of the family. Identify overall strengths, needs, and concerns.

**23. RECOMMENDATION**

Recommend issuance of a foster home license or application denial. If home is to be licensed, recommend licensing conditions: number, sex, age of foster children to be placed, and the foster home certification type(s).

**NAME OF SPECIALIST, SIGNATURE AND DATE**

**NAME OF SUPERVISOR, SIGNATURE AND DATE**